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Children & Family Services Division Office of Child Abuse Prevention

THE LINKAGES PROJECT

CalWORKs and Child Welfare collaborate to improve outcomes

The Linkages Project (Linkages) was implemented in 2000 and developed and directed by the California Center for Research on Women and Children, in partnership with the California Department of Social Services (CDSS). The Stuart Foundation provided funding for the initial four-year initiative to develop a coordinated services approach between CalWORKs (California's version of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) and Child Welfare Services programs. By coordinating programs that strengthen child abuse prevention efforts and assist families in achieving self-sufficiency, California's children and families gain better services and improved outcomes.

In California, most counties include a large contingent of children and families involved in both CalWORKs and Child Welfare Services. Parents or caretakers must navigate between two different systems, which often reflect conflicting requirements and timeframes. Linkages improves the services coordination and case planning, prevents duplication of efforts and maximizes funding and resources to better serve clients accessing both systems. For example, the Linkages collaborative helps to engage CalWORKs families faced with multiple barriers to meeting their work participation requirements. It assists child welfare families with their case plans to keep children safely at home, preventing the need for removal of children from the home as well as re-entry of children into foster care.

Twelve pioneer counties were part of the implementation phase and 17 counties signed on in 2005 during phase II development. In 2006, California was among five states awarded a five year Federal grant to continue, further enhance and evaluate the project in the existing counties as well as expand to additional counties. There are currently 33 participating counties. The CDSS' Office of Child Abuse Prevention (OCAP) contracts with the Child and Family Policy Institute of California (CFPIC) to provide coordination, training, and technical assistance. A formal Statewide evaluation is underway by Harder+Company Community Research.

State, county and CPIC staff comprise a Statewide Linkages Oversight Committee, which monitors the implementation process and outcome evaluation. They also address relevant policy and ongoing sustainability issues of Linkages. For further information, please visit the Linkages

Web site at www.cfpic.org/linkages/linkages_001.htm